

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07  
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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6628  
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 00182

DEPT. ALSO PASS LO AID/LA/MRSD FOR GEORGE PHILLIPS

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: ELAB, PINT, ES  
SUBJECT: UNION COMUNAL SALVADORENA (UCS): PRESIDENT MEETS  
WITH MEMBERS OF THE TWO GROUPS

REF: SAN SALVADOR 0002

BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE.

SUMMARY. PRESIDENT ROMERO, ALONG WITH OTHER HIGH-LEVEL GOES  
OFFICIALS, MET ON JANUARY 4 WITH TITO CASTRO, JORGE CAMACHO,  
AND MEMBERS OF THEIR RESPECTIVE GROUPS WITHIN THE UCS. AS A RESULT  
OF THE MEETING, PRESIDENT ROMERO ESTABLISHED TWO COMMISSIONS  
TO LOOK INTO UCS PROBLEMS--ONE TO LOOK INTO THE DISPUTED DEC-  
EMBER 18 ELECTIONS AND THE OTHER INTO THE FINANCES AND PLANNING  
ASPECTS OF THE UCS. THREE MEMBERS EACH FROM BOTH GROUPS ARE  
SUPPOSED TO BE MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSIONS. CASTRO MADE CLEAR  
TO THE PRESIDENT AND THE B HER GOES OFFICIALS THAT HE COULD  
NOT WORK WITH CAMACHO AND IT IS UNCLEAR AT THIS POINT IF HIS  
GROUP WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE DELIBERATIONS OF THE TWO COMMISSIONS.  
END SUMMARY.

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1. IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFFS ON JANUARY 4, JORGE  
CAMACHO REPORTED ON A MEETING HELD IN PRESIDENT ROMERO'S  
OFFICE BETWEEN HIS GROUP AND TITO CASTRO'S GROUP. THE TWO-AND-  
A-HALF HOUR MEETING, HELD HAN. 4, WAS ATTENDED BY PRESIDENT  
ROMERO, VICE-PRESIDENT JULIO ERNESTO ASTACIO, MINISTER OF LABOR  
COL. ROBERTO ESCOBAR GARCIA, GENERAL JOSE NAPOLEON AGREDA  
(VIVATE SECRETARY TO THE PRESIDENT), SUBSECRETARY FOR LABOR RENE

IVAN CASTRO, AND OTHER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS INCLUDING THE PRESIDENT OF THE ISTA AND THE PRESIDENT OF FEDECREDITO.

2. ACCORDING TO JORGE CAMACHO, TITO CASTRO AND HIS GROUP WERE INDUCED TO ATTEND BY BEING MADE TO THINK POSTPONED INTERVIEW THEY HAD REQUESTED WITH PRESIDENT ROMERO HAD FINALLY BEEN GRANTED. CAMACHO SAID THAT TITO CASTRO WAS QUITE SURPRISED UNQUOTE TO SEE HIM AND THE MEMBERS OF HIS GROUP PRESENT.

3. ACCORDING TO CAMACHO, THE MINISTER OF LABOR STATED THAT THE WHOLE QUESTION OF THE UNION COMUNAL SALVADORENA WOULD HAVE TO BE STUDIED BEFORE THERE COULD BE A FINAL RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEMS BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS. THE PRESIDENT APPARENTLY AGREED WITH THIS ASSESSMENT AND TWO COMMISSIONS WERE APPOINTED TO STUDY THE VARIOUS PROBLEMS OF THE UCS.

4. ONE COMMISSION IS TO LOOK INTO THE DISPUTED DECEMBER 18 ELECTIONS. ACCORDING TO CAMACHO, THIS IS TO BE COMPOSED OF THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR, GENERAL ARMANDO ROJAS (WHO WILL ACT AS CHAIRMAN); THE MINISTER OF LABOR; THE PRESIDENT OF ISTA; AND THREE MEMBERS EACH FROM THE CASTRO AND CAMACHO GROUPS. THE OTHER COMMISSION IS TO LOOK INTO THE FINANCIAL AND PLANNING ARRANGEMENTS OF THE UCS. IT IS TO BE COMPOSED OF MINISTER OF LABOR; SUB-SECRETARY FOR LABOR; PRESIDENT OF FEDICREDITO; AND GENERAL AGREDA, WITH AGAIN THREE MEMBERS EACH FROM THE TWO UCS GROUPS. CAMACHO SAID THAT HIS OWN GROUP HAD APPOINTED ITS MEMBERS (TO INCLUDE CONFIDENTIAL

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ROMERO PERLA) AND THAT THE TWO COMMISSIONS WOULD BEGIN THEIR DELIBERATIONS ON MONDAY, JANUARY 9.

5. ACCORDING TO CAMACHO, MANY ACCUSATIONS WERE MADE AGAINST TITO CASTRO'S GROUP INCLUDING THE ALLEGED AFFILIATION OF SOME OF ITS MEMBERS WITH THE FPL. ALSO, HE SAID REFERENCE WAS MADE TO THE MICHAEL HAMMER-TITO CASTRO LETTER OF NOVEMBER 10, 1977 (SEE REFTEL).

6. IN AN EVENING CONVERSATION ON JANUARY 4 WITH DCM, CASTRO SAID THAT HE TOLD THE PRESIDENT AND THE OTHERS PRESENT THAT IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO WORK WITH CAMACHO. CASTRO SPOKE TO THE DCM ABOUT ONLY ONE COMMISSION THAT WAS TO BE SET UP, THE ONE ON THE ELECTIONS. THIS AND OTHER ASPECTS OF THE INTERVIEW WILL NEED FURTHER CLARIFICATION. IT IS NOT CERTAIN AT THIS POINT WHETHER CASTRO'S GROUP WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE COMMISSION PROCEEDINGS. END LIMITED OFFICIAL USE.

7. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL. THE VICE-PRESIDENT TOLD DCM THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS ARE DIRECTED TO SAVE THE UCS, ESPECIALLY SINCE NEW LAND LAW (LEY DE IMPUESTO TERRITORIAL Y AGROPECUARIO)

DEPENDS ON EXISTENCE OF AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES AS RECIPIENTS OF ACQUIRED LAND. VICE-PRESIDENT STATED THAT UCS IS SYMBOL OF THE COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT IN EL SALVADOR. HE EXPRESSED PERSONAL OPINION THAT UCS SHOULD BE IN HANDS OF FACTION WHICH HAS GREATEST SUPPORT AMONG CAMPESINOS; AND THAT THE FACTION WITH THE GREATEST SUPPORT WAS TITO CASTRO'S. VICE-PRESIDENT INSISTED GOVERNMENT WANTED A STRONG, INDEPENDENT UCS AND WAS NOT INTERESTED IN TAKING OVER CONTROL.

8. COMMENT. THE EMBASSY VIEWS WITH SOME CONCERN THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH THE MEETING BY THE PRESIDENT WITH THE TWO GROUPS WAS BROUGHT ABOUT AND THE SETTING UP OF THE TWO COMMISSIONS. THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS MAY WELL BE NECESSARY TO RESOLVE THE DISPUTED DECEMBER 18 ELECTIONS. THE SETTING  
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UP OF THE COMMISSION ON UCS FINANCES AND PLANNING IS, IN THE EMBASSY'S VIEW, A DIFFERENT MATTER. WHILE THE UCS DOES HAVE TO DEPEND ON GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS SUCH AS FEDICREDITO TO A CERTAIN EXTENT AND GOES CONCERNS ABOUT THE FINANCIAL STABILITY OF THE UCS ARE WARRANTED, THE EMBASSY IS CONCERNED THAT THE GOES OR ELEMENTS IN IT WILL GO BEYOND THIS SUBJECT MATTER AND SEEK LEVERAGE TO OBTAIN AN EXPANDED ROLE IN UCS AFFAIRS. THE DISCLAIMERS BY GOES SPOKESMEN, WHILE PERHAPS SINCERE, DO NOT DISGUISE THE FACT THAT POTENTIAL FOR SUCH AN EXPANDED GOES ROLE DOES EXIST DUE TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TWO COMMCZCIONS AND ALLEGED INVOLVEMENT OF SUCH PERSONS AS COL. JOAQUIN FLORES AMAYA AND COL. ROBERTO SANTIBANEZ, JUST NAMED HEAD OF ANSESAL AND EVEN CAMACHO HIMSELF AS POSSIBLE GOVERNMENT AGENT. THERE IS LIKELY GREAT INTEREST IN UCS ON PART OF SECURITY OFFICIALS BECAUSE OF FEAR OF COMMUNIST PENETRATION OR TAKE-OVER ESPECIALLY IF CURRENT PROBLEMS SHOULD PROVIDE A POLITICAL VACUUM. NOTE. EMBASSY CONSIDERS AUTOMATIC PASSAGE OF THESE MESSAGES TO AIFLD WASHINGTON OR AIFLD GUATEMALA NOT ENCESSARY OR ADVISABLE AND REQUESTS MATERIAL FOR PASSAGE BE EVALUATED BEFOREHAND. WE CONSIDER VICE-PRESIDENT'S COMMENT IN PARA 7 AS HAVING BEEN MADE IN CONFIDENCE AND EMBASSY COMMENT ABOVE AS RESERVED FOR USG OFFICIALS ONLY.

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## Message Attributes

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